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OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

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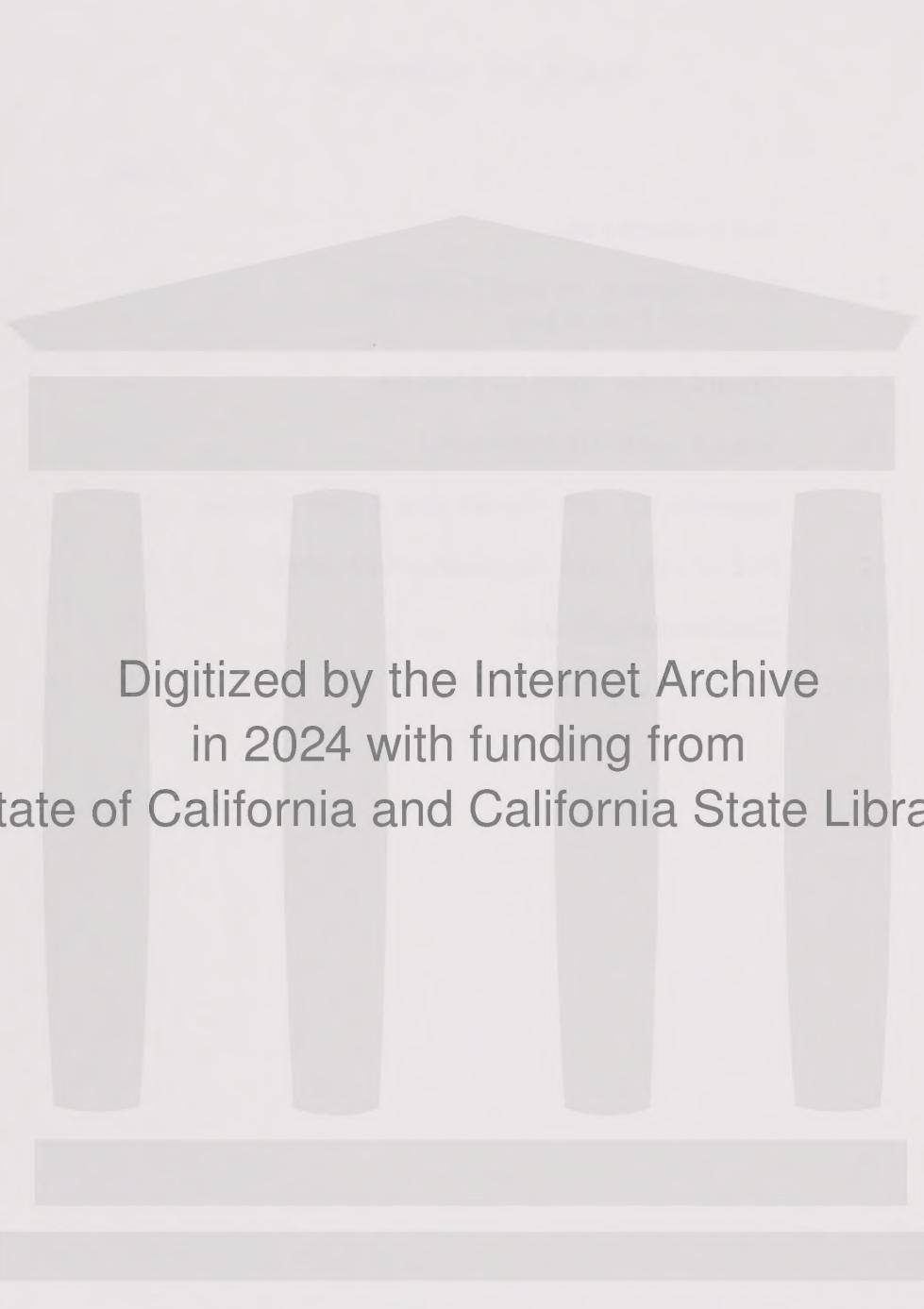
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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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PREFACE

The heritage of this land exists not so much in this nation's urban areas, but primarily in the vast expanse of our open spaces. From rolling hills and endless plains, men and women grew the food that nourished a growing nation; and over the rugged Rocky Mountains, pioneers pushed onward to eventually spread a new people to the western shore of a great continent.

A massive landscape, that for centuries was sparsely populated by a people who held reverence for the land was feverishly resettled by a new and abusive industrial society. The rapidity at which this society grew was indeed phenomenal: a burgeoning population spread across the land, monumental cities were built, and a new nation became the attraction for a world community.

As the cities' magnetism drew greater numbers, this nation was to become characterized by bustling urban enclaves. Urban America soon became home to millions of citizens. With the abundant opportunities associated with urban living, such as jobs, education and cultural diversity, severe problems began to strain the urban environment. Overcrowding became synonymous with city life, blue skies turned a dull brown and gray, the water became foul, and the little remaining open space was to be mismanaged and challenged.

In one such urban community, a youngster wrote in October of 1962:

Dear Mr. President
we have no place
to go when we
want to go out
in the canyon
Because there
are going to build
houses so could you
set aside some
land where we ^{could}
play? thank you for listening
LOVE SCOTT

The plight of Scott is not unlike other children in any urbanized area. The fact is, all urban dwellers are faced with the same unfortunate situation. Where do our children play? Where do our older citizens go to enjoy the warmth of the sun or the beauty of a landscaped green? Should not open space be incorporated into our urban areas? Would not the beauty of a well cared for open area contribute to a sense of well-being and an understanding of our heritage as well?

INTRODUCTION

Legislative recognition of ecological issues has been precipitated by a strong citizen outcry that environmental protection measures from all divisions of government be initiated. Stemming directly from the desire for proper environmental planning, the California legislature has required that cities and counties include an open space element as part of their respective general plans for the "preservation of natural resources including plant and animal life, scientific study purposes, and the watershed; open space for outdoor recreation including areas of outstanding scenic, historic and cultural value, and areas particularly suited for park and recreation purposes; open space for public health and safety including areas of which require special management or regulation because of hazardous or special conditions such as earthquake fault zones, watersheds, and areas presenting high fire risks and required for the protection of water quality and water reservoirs".

This element sets forth to define the six functions of open space: resource protection; preservation of natural and human resources; health, welfare and public well being; public safety; corridors and urban expansion. It shall also delineate the goals and objectives necessary for the assessment of existing open space and will establish standards and criteria for the designation of future open space. Subsequent to a description and illustration of existing open space in Burbank, proposals for future open space are outlined. To be included in this section is a sketch plan for the city's largest open space resource, the Verdugo Mountains. The sections on element

review shall include recommendations for citizen participation. The fundamental role of the element is the discussion of the role of open space in our urban environment.

OPEN SPACE: DEFINITIONS AND FUNCTIONS

For purposes of broad definition, open space can be referred to as any parcel of land which is essentially unimproved, absent of building or structures, and which is devoted to an open space use and is multi-purpose in function.

Given the ambiguity of this statement, the definition of open space can best be described by a thorough description of the characteristics and functions of open space in an urban setting.

Aesthetic Function

Garrett Eckbo, in his book, Urban Landscape Design, states:

Architecture, trees and open space are the basic complimentary elements of urban design. City planning which does not make possible good architecture, good tree culture, and adequate open space is failing to reach its potentials. The city which is not beautiful is not functional and hence a waste of all time, energy, labor, and material which went into its construction.

The aesthetic function of open space is therefore one of providing a visual and psychological relief from the monotonous omnipresence of building, street and automobile. The physical blight so present in our urban areas can very often be softened by introducing an open and green space to a specific environment. If an individual is to relate to an open area, the area must be created to a scale that is neither too large nor too small - the open space should allow one to perceive a physical relationship with the immediate environment.

Open space may additionally function to protect the quality of ground water, and, assist the improvement of airshed quality.

Landfill projects, which are generally unattractive, may be designed for future open space purposes - the land may be used for public sanitation purposes with the ultimate future of being recycled to a passive or recreational open space use.

Recreational Function

Open space has historically been equated with recreational purposes. While this narrow definition is refuted by this element, the linear relationship between open space and recreation is one of an amplifying importance. With the increased mobility of our citizenry, and the additional leisure time being allotted to society, as well as the general and growing affluence of society, recreational open space will meet with an expanding demand. Areas of recreational open space may assume the status of either neighborhood, community, city-wide or regional parks. Open space can provide the urban dweller with a multitude of recreational uses, including equestrian and hiking trails, bicycling, golf, swimming, boating and skiing.

Preservation Function

The significance of open space for improved resource management is becoming of greater consequence due to our rapidly expanding population. Greater attention is being given to establishing wilderness open space for wildlife refuge purposes. Open space may be used to preserve areas of historical meaning, as well as valued and irreplaceable nature features, such as cliffs, headlands, promontories, rock out-croppings, sand dunes, and rivers, cascading waterfalls, and lakes.

All too often areas of natural beauty, which offer a special element to urban living, are lost without consideration for the present or future needs of society.

Function of Open Space in Defining Urban Development

Characteristic of Burbank, like much of urban America, is the sprawling low density type of development. Typical to this form of development is the low silhouette of the single family residences and strip commercial developments. Though the single family home utilizes land on an inefficient basis, many Americans still strive for that life style. Front setbacks, rear yards and narrow side yards cannot be considered a positive contribution to the landscape. Only a well designed open space system can modify this monotonous urban form. The prevention of this type of urban development was a fundamental reason for the establishment of federal open space programs in the area of urban development.

If a developed area is stable and lacking in open space, including parks, often little can be done to reshape existing patterns of development. In the case of an existing community fortunate enough to possess natural features such as hills, mountains, bays, rivers, inlets, lakes and streams, such open space may suffice in defining the character of the community and preventing continuing urban sprawl.

Public Welfare Function

Little has been done to provide open space in areas of potential danger, man-made or natural hazards. Areas crisscrossed with earthquake faults, and areas susceptible to flooding, landslides and fires are best left in an undeveloped state since present construction

technology cannot always assure one's safety against the forces of nature. Other areas of potential danger include areas below dams and flood plains. Airport approach paths also pose potentially hazardous conditions, and with increasing airplane noise, such areas are often unacceptable for development, and thus may best be left open.

Economic Function

The intrinsic economic value of open space is less obvious than a developed plot of land. The sociological and psychological benefits derived from open space or park lands may be deemed too subjective to be calculable, but as it has been stated:

Municipal officials too frequently lose sight of the fact that the profit from a piece of property on the tax rolls is the revenue received less the cost of services rendered. Those services include utilities, streets, sewage disposal, garbage removal, drainage, police and fire protection, plus the cost of education for the children that live there.¹

This statement is substantiated by a report done for the City of Palo Alto, California, which concluded that municipal costs from providing services are not matched by taxes received from the developed properties in hillside areas; and generally the expense of providing municipal services for even horizontal suburban developments (sprawl) is manifested in high property taxes for the common property owner.

¹Ruth Rush, "Look How Open Space Can Hold Down Your Taxes", Planning and Civil Government, Vol. 28, No. 3 (September 1962, pp. 24-26.

One easily recognizable effect of open space is the increased value of properties surrounding a well designed and well maintained open space area. The enhanced value of the land means additional revenue realized for the city from this increased land value, and without the additional cost of providing services.

Corridor Function

Open space can provide for attractively landscaped public facility easements. Power and telephone easements need not be a blighting influence on a community, nor must transportation or transit ways be sterile corridors of cement. In some cases, public facility corridors can be florally designed to provide pleasant sitting areas, or planned for bicycle paths.

STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

Prior to the establishment of community goals and objectives, standards and criteria for open space must be developed to properly assess Burbank's needs for maintaining and expanding existing open space allocations. The following standards and criteria of open space will permit a realistic appraisal of the scope of existing and potential sources of open space.

A. Do existing natural resources offer potential for recreational use?

1. Would the establishment of open space in undeveloped mountains provide camping, hiking, picnicking and equestrian riding facilities?
2. Would recreational open space expand both the open space and recreation allotments for the city?

B. Will an existing or potential open space area positively affect the ecological balance of an area?

1. Are watershed areas needed to reduce the effects of rainwater runoff?
2. Would open space provide for ground water recharge areas?
3. Would open space inhibit soil erosion, thus preserve the natural landscape?
4. Would the designation of open space serve to protect the wildlife of an area?

5. Would open space provide areas for solid waste disposal and the eventual reclamation of the land?

C. Does potential exist to substantially upgrade the urban environment or define the community?

1. Would open space inhibit or prevent sprawl?
2. Would the community's boundaries be permanently highlighted?
3. Does parcel size inhibit good planning and contribute to blight--would such a lot be better suited for open space?

D. Does existing or potential open space contribute to public health and/or protect the general welfare of the public?

1. Would the establishment of open space act as a buffer between incompatible land use zones?
2. Would deficiencies in recreation or park needs be met?
3. Would the disadvantaged benefit from the open space?

E. What potential hazards, man-made or natural, would be detrimental to life and property if an area were developed?

1. Is there a clear danger of brush fires?
2. Do geologic conditions pose possible earth slippage conditions?
3. Propinquity to airport approach pattern - do airport approach patterns pose possible danger to life and property?

- F. Is a site nonreplaceable, such as possessing historical, scenic, geologic, or cultural values not found elsewhere in the community?
- G. Does an open space site contribute to the economic well-being of the community?
 1. Would municipal services outweigh revenue for such services as fire and police property, sewage disposal, and education costs?
 2. Would the property tax rate of an adjacent area be adversely affected as a consequence to development?
 3. Would social costs and dollar costs expand if action to designate an area for open space purposes was postponed to a later date?
- H. Must a site be purchased outright or is purchase-in-fee an alternative for acquiring open space?
 1. Purchase-in-fee methods include tax incentives, easements, leases, and gifts, development or use rights, and protective zoning.
- I. Does in-use or planned open space have community and regional significance?
 1. Does the existing or proposed open space conform to the City General Plan?
 2. Does an existing or proposed site conform to the regional plan and contribute to regional open space and recreation needs?

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The community open space goals and objectives are set forth in the spirit of an improved community which was environment established by the 1964 General Plan. Although the thrust of this element is directed towards the open space potential of the Verdugo Mountains, the goals and objectives are illustrative of the various functions of open space in an urban environment and are presented to meet the varied need of the city.

The goals and objectives herein are not to be considered absolute. They are simply broad statements whose purpose is to direct the community towards a general policy, and subsequently, into specific action. Goals, objectives, and policies are expected to change as the community progresses. Under the subtitle "Element Revision" a mechanism is recommended for citizen participation in the process of updating of the element as a unit, and the revision of specific goals, objectives and policies as well.

Recommendations:

1. To maintain the Verdugo Mountains as a scenic backdrop and the primary source of open space for the City of Burbank.
2. To proceed with acquisition and/or use-rights for the bulk of Verdugo Mountain land held in private ownership.
3. Limit hillside development as much as possible in accordance with the recommendations contained in the Conservation Element.
4. To promote the use of open space for both passive and active recreation purposes.

5. To improve the quality of housing by providing for well planned and properly maintained open space, especially for low income, minority, and senior citizen housing developments.
6. Promote open space for areas of potential natural and/or man-made hazards.
7. Reduce the cost to both the public and private sectors in establishing open space.
8. Promote the aesthetic and economic value of the city's residential, commercial, and industrial areas by providing for well maintained open space.
9. To encourage citizen interest and participation in the area of open space management and development.
10. Mountain land presently owned by the city should not be disposed of.
11. To coordinate the city's open space program in a relationship to regional plans.
12. Appropriate studies should be undertaken to insure the consistancy between mountain land use and the General Plan recommendations.

INVENTORY OF EXISTING OPEN SPACE

The inventory of existing open space is simply a listing of existing or potential sources of open space in the City of Burbank. The listing is not to be considered all-inclusive and not all listed sources are presently under general use by the public.

Map Number I illustrates existing open space in the city.



Existing Open Space



<u>Site</u>	<u>Acreages</u>
Bel Aire Field	1.75
Betheny Springs*	7.74
Brace Canyon Park	17.57
Buena Vista Park	17.62
DeBell Golf Course	115.33
Golden Mall	4.04
McCambridge Park	16.92
Miller Park	1.52
Mountain View Park	2.73
Northwest Park	10.00
Olive Avenue Park	15.36
Pacific Park	5.29
Palm Park	1.50
Santa Anita Playlot	.34
Stough Park	112.67
Valley Park	3.43
Verdugo Park	6.69
Vickroy Park	1.49
Whitnall Highway Line Easement	8.44
Wildwood Canyon Park	500.00
Verdugo Mountains* (publicly and privately owned)	1600.00
Selected School Ground Sites*	<u>98.00</u>
Total Acreage	2548.43

*Not generally accessable to public due to use, ownership or accessibility.

POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The policies and recommendations are presented in an effort to direct the city toward the fulfillment of the goals and objectives of this element and thereby achieve the purpose of this element.

Policy development and formulation is not limited to only those specific recommendations described in this section. Areas of equal or greater attention may become apparent in order to meet the goal of providing the city with a well balanced open space system.

Open Space and the Verdugo Mountains

The city administration has adhered to the mountain policy as illustrated by its application, and subsequent approval, for an open space land grant of \$489,000 for land acquisition and development. As a component of the application, (refer to Map 2 for illustration of public and private land), Ecoplan-Verdugos was prepared as a comprehensive development plan for the mountains.

The thrust of this element is directed to the open space potential of the Verdugo Mountains. The land shown as Mountain Reserve is not suitable for urban development and should remain in its natural state. The uses for the area should be limited to conservation, watershed, flood control and special recreational areas.

Lockheed
Air Terminal

Valley
Country

OPEN SPACE ELEMENT
VERDUGO MOUNTAINS
OWNERSHIP MAP

City Ownership
Privately Owned
Rancho Providencia Line
Mountain Area



Columbia
Studio

Disney
Studio

Los Angeles

Warner Bros
Studio

Colorado Country Club

Los Angeles River

It is the expressed intent of this element that the above policy not be changed and that the city should proceed at an accelerated pace to acquire all land outlined in the grant application for park, recreation and open space purposes.

Proposed Verdugo Mountain Park Sketch Plan

As planned, the proposed park is projected to encompass approximately 2100 acres.² It will be significant for it will preserve the natural character of the mountain, meet many community goals and objectives, and will dramatically raise the open space and recreation allotment for the people of Burbank and the eastern San Fernando Valley.

Four existing park facilities are within the perimeters of the proposed park area. Subsequent to the completion of the park, these existing recreational facilities should be designated as a special park facility, each therefore contributing a character of its own to the park. The four existing parks are:

Brace Canyon Park

Although this park is not specifically a mountain park, its proximity to the mountains speaks for its relationship to the adjacent Verdugos. Approximately 10 acres in size, Brace

²Excerpted, in part, from Ecoplan-Verdugos, 1970

Canyon Park is used very heavily by the people within its neighborhood. Its picnic facilities are considered inadequate at present and plans call for more off-street parking as well as increased picnic facilities. Along with McCambridge Park, Brace Canyon Park serves the entire east half of Burbank for the children's recreation program.

DeBell Golf Course

What was once steep undevelopable mountain lands is now an outstanding regional recreational attraction. The golf course encompasses 103 acres of land, and also offers golfers a 3-par course. A featured attraction is the Castaway Restaurant with cocktail lounge, ballroom and banquet room, overlooking the entire San Fernando Valley. Attendance recorded at this facility for a twelve-month period averages 85,000 people.

Wildwood Canyon Park

Wildwood Canyon Park is 500 acres in size. Designed to preserve the natural mountain character, it exemplifies the style of recreational area sought to be established for the entire mountain area. Present facilities include a picnic area and day camping facility. Since its creation, it has been the object of a great deal of interest which indicates the popular sentiment towards this type of passive recreational facility. Wildwood Canyon Park can be considered a prototype for the regional park. The developed portion of the park is 7.68 acres in size.

Stough Park

Stough Park, featuring the famous Starlight Bowl, represents one of the two large recreational developments within the city's foothill area. The park is approximately 100 acres in size, a major portion of it once being a canyon and which has since been filled with sanitary land fill. Expansion of the seating and parking facilities for the Bowl area is proposed in the long-standing plan for the park. Other suggestions include expansion and improvement of existing picnic facilities as well as increased landscaping.

An existing point of interest is a ridge of land jutting out toward the San Fernando Valley known as "Promontory Point", which offers an outstanding view of the valley below.

At such time when the desired mountain land is acquired and developed, and the proposed park is realized, the following facilities will be included:

Hiking Trails

Here people can leave the last vestige of the city by parking their automobile at one of the various entry points to the park and embark upon a trail. The hiking trail affords any the opportunity to detach themselves from the man-made pattern and break away to a natural setting. It is a place void of concrete and structures, where one can view not an induced luxuriance of plant life, but rather the natural vegetation characteristic of the region he inhabits. The trail shall lend itself to use by people of different abilities and interests.

A hiker can amble along for a hundred yards and return or negotiate an entire trail circuit which provides a two-mile hike. Trails will be created to yield the greatest number of viewpoints and exposure to the hillside vegetation while carefully avoiding a trail which might make it too difficult for the average person to traverse the mountain side.

Vistas

The view of the sky above and the works of man below continues to fascinate mankind. The perspective from a 2900 foot crest offers people a view seemingly worlds apart from his usual perspective in the valleys and basins he usually inhabits. The many vistas along the trails will provide hikers an overview of the land and a vantage point from which he might identify his community in its geographic setting. Viewpoints will be cleared at the ends of ridges where the most unobstructed view exists.

Camp Sites

Camp sites, with the necessary built-in facilities to ensure fire safety, will dot the hillside and provide a place to rough-it for a night. With a fire permit, hikers can camp on the trail and cook their meals, enjoying time away from the routine. For most people, this is a luxury encumbered with long preparation, a great traveling distance and a great deal of expense. Proposed here are camp sites that would serve urban dwellers only a few miles from their home, making it possible to enjoy camping activities very inexpensively, without the tiring and often discouraging long trip in the family automobile.

Horse Trails

Horse trails, exclusively for horses, will wind around the terrain of the hillside providing horse enthusiasts a rather different kind of horse trail for this area. Again, the theme of the unaltered natural setting will be carried out making it possible for riders to enjoy the natural mountain atmosphere. An equestrian center is planned for the park to serve those wishing to ride or stable horses. Horse shows and related activities are foreseen as some of the possible activities, due to the large number of horse owners and enthusiasts within the community. In keeping with the purpose of the plan, the park would be used to maximize the enjoyment of everyone including those with varied interest who contribute to the flavor of the overall setting.

Picnic Areas

For those who do not desire to penetrate deeply into the park, family picnic areas will be located nearby parking areas. These sites will offer daytime facilities and provide a natural, scenic and educational setting for family picnics.

The possibility exists that the funds available from the Open Space Land Grant Program may prove insufficient to acquire all the land the city desires. This is due, in part, to the inflationary trends in the economy coupled with the length of time needed for acquisition and negotiation procedures. This element therefore suggests the use of revenue sharing funds for land acquisition and open space development.

The effect of this action will be:

- A. Preserve mountains as scenic backdrops.
- B. Increase open space and recreation supply for the city.
- C. Reduce costs for providing municipal service necessary for development, i.e., school, fire and police protection, and utilities. A tax increase for expanding service would likely result if mountains are developed.
- D. Will enhance the value of adjacent properties.
- E. Eliminate hazardous mountain development conditions, e.g., fire, erosion, geologic.
- F. The designation of mountain open space conforms to county and regional open space plans.

Parks, Recreation and Open Space

It is not the intention of this element to detail the park and recreation needs for the City of Burbank. The adequacy or inadequacy of existing recreational facilities will be thoroughly discussed in another element of the General Plan. This element does, however, seek to stress the continuation of two policies established by the 1964 General Plan: the eventual reclamation of the sanitary land fill site for open space/recreation purposes and the establishment of playlots throughout the City, but especially in those areas having a deficiency of open space and recreation facilities. Proposed playlot areas are illustrated on Map No. 3.

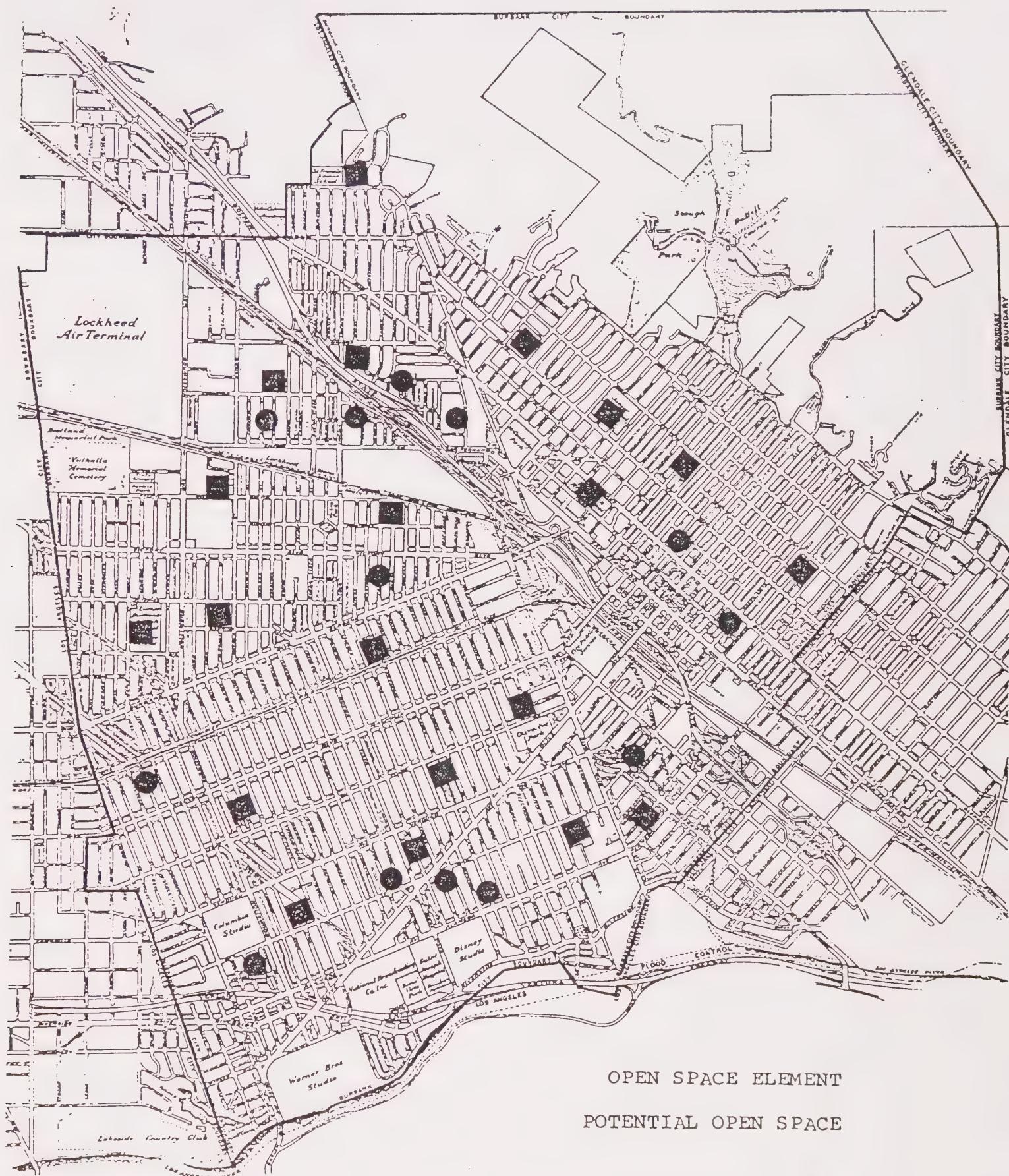
It is also proposed that public corridor easements be developed as passive open space. If recreational potential exists, it is recommended walking and bicycle paths be provided for leisurely recreational activities.

The effect of these policies will:

1. Extend recreational land to areas of greatest need.
2. Improve the aesthetic quality of neighborhood life.
3. Remove the necessity for the young and old of having to travel long distances to enjoy the benefits of open space and recreation.

School Sites and Open Space

For the purpose of this element, public school sites shall not be regarded as primary sources of open space due to the extent of pavement over ground surfaces, the restriction to public use, and



OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

POTENTIAL OPEN SPACE

School Sites



General Playlot Locations



the generally non-aesthetic quality of existing sites. A concerted effort between the Burbank Unified School District and the city for the general improvement of the school ground sites would allow the sites to reach their full potential as useable open space. Such a policy would conceivably entail redesigning existing sites with greater attention given to aesthetic, functional and public use considerations. (School sites shown on Map No. 3)

The effect of such a policy shall:

1. Increase the city recreational open space sources.
2. Assist in reducing open space development cost since sites would be multiple-use in nature.
3. Enhance the aesthetic value of the neighborhood.
4. Will provide a greater open space potential for all neighborhoods with special significance for the low income and minority areas.

Vacant Lots

The vast majority of land in Burbank is developed with some use. The primary exception is the Verdugo Mountains. There is, though, a great deal of small and irregularly shaped land dispersed throughout the city, approximately 56.2 acres. Many of these lots are found in residential areas and are so small that they do not meet the minimal property development standard of the respective zone. Lots in commercial and industrial zones are often too small or so irregular in shape that development becomes impractical. The end result is that these lots remain vacant, become covered with weeds and littered with debris, and become a blighting influence on the surrounding properties.

This element therefore recommends the city initiate a complete study to determine the feasibility of either purchasing or acquiring the use-rights of these vacant lots for the purpose of providing either passive open space or playlots.

The effect of this action will:

1. Provide additional source of open space.
2. Enhance the aesthetic and economic value of adjacent properties.
3. Promote the well-being of the neighborhood and its people.
4. Allow for the economic provision of open space.

IMPLEMENTATION

A successful implementation program is dependent upon the cooperation of the public and private sectors alike.

Chart "A" illustrates various methods available for the implementation of the open space program. The method of implementation will depend upon the function of the open space and its location. The chart draws a correlation between the functions of open space and the most suitable methods of implementation.

IMPLEMENTATION TECHNIQUES* - CHART "A"

I. Acquisition of Fee

- A. Purchase
- B. Donation or gift
- C. Tax foreclosures
- D. Trade

II. Acquisition of Less than Fee

- A. Easement
- B. Leases
- C. Rights of Entry
- D. Covenants Deed Restrictions
- E. Other Development Rights

III. Regulation

- A. Conservation Zoning
- B. Subdivision ordinances requiring land dedication

IV. Preferential Tax Assessment

Contracts or Agree-
ments

*SCAG, Interim Open Space Element, p. 37

REVIEW AND REVISION

The goals and objectives of the community are always given to change. As current objectives are satisfied, new priorities need to be established. It is, therefore, necessary this element be subject to periodic review and revision. The scope of revision is determined by the accomplishments the element has made for effectuating position change within the community. A review every two years should be adequate in meeting the continuing needs of the element and the community.

A citizens committee, to be composed of individuals chosen to represent specific neighborhoods, should be formed to assist the professional staff in the formulation of goals and objectives, and policy. It is assumed that those who live in a neighborhood are best able to understand and communicate their respective needs. The component of citizen participation should have the effect of strengthening the purpose of the element.



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